

Christians, the Boers have a right to the preaching of the gospel, and deliverance from the grievous exactions by which the upper classes welter in luxury and grind the poor in the dust

He then turns to the peasants. Princes and lords, he admits, by their attitude towards the gospel and their arbitrary dealings with their subjects, well deserve to be overthrown by God. They have no excuse. If the peasants are acting with a good conscience, God will help them, even if they suffer defeat and death. But they must beware of believing "the spirits and preachers whom Satan has inspired under the guise of the gospel" (Luther has not forgotten Carlstadt). Let them not take God's name in vain. Let them be obedient to the powers that be. It is the old story—no individual or class may oppose injustice with force. However bad the princes and lords may be, they have no right to rise in rebellion. "Vengeance is mine," not yours, not even on grounds of natural right, is all that Luther has to say on the matter. Evidently, the peasants could not have invoked a more impracticable adviser. Don't listen to these preachers who advocate strong measures. They are inspired by the devil, and disgrace the gospel. "Suffering, suffering, cross, cross, that is the Christian's right, and no other." Let them trust in God; he himself has done so, and see what God hath done for him in spite of pope and kaiser and all other tyrants. True; but to tell these peasants that they have no right as Christians to insist on their emancipation from serfdom, because Abraham and the patriarchs and prophets had serfs, was pure idiocy, and proves conclusively that the theologian Luther was not the man to set things right in an age when other minds besides those of the theologians had started into activity.

The peasants, of course, paid no heed to this sort of antiquated, grandmotherly talk. They ignored Luther in their preference for the preachers of rebellion, and Luther, on his part, waxed savage. He exhausted his rich vocabulary of expletives in their denunciation. They were doing pure "devil's work," which was to some extent true enough, and the philippic has some justification as against the ravings of a Miinzer, "the arch devil who rules at Miuhlhausen." But